

(Breakthrough, Spring 1988)

CREATIVE WRITING AND HEMI-SYNC®

by Trevor Magilton

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November, 1987—Over a period of three weeks our English Department used two METAMUSIC tapes as part of their creative writing programme. The experiments involved five groups of students in their normal English classes in the age groups 11-12, 12- 13, 13-14, and 15-16. The tapes used were *Nostalgia* and *Downstream*.

The Method

1. A short introduction of the tape with an indication of its source and the kind of context in which it was normally used;
2. Fifteen minutes playing without writing, during which students were invited to let their minds range freely;
3. A fifteen minute discussion and sharing of ideas and images from the first listening period;
4. A thirty minute writing session, throughout which the tape continued to play.

Reactions In all instances the experiment was well received, and some pupils who did not normally feel “creative writing” was for them got going with considerable enthusiasm. Some students early on found *Nostalgia* depressing and for that reason, we tended to use *Downstream* more.

There was a great range of images, but certain themes recurred among individuals and groups. The most recurring themes were of the sea, of flying, or of falling without fear. Very few of the images had people in them but were felt as solitary experiences. Some specific examples are as follows: “looking out of window at the horizon; it gradually becomes a blue line of cliffs upon which I am walking,” “I am passing through a series of rooms opening into each other; the final room is church-like and has a vaguely apprehended central activity—an alter table, a coffin,” “a coffin going through curtains in a crematorium,” “a boy fishing by a river—unknown to him a tiger is creeping up from behind.”

All expressed orally a “detachment” from the perceived experience (e.g., falling endlessly without anxiety) and the instructors wondered if this sense of detachment from anxiety was indeed part of the design of such stimulus in the first place. This detachment was contrasted with a sense of involvement in the creative writing task—a sense of involvement which came out in metaphor and transitions built upon each other to a higher degree than usual in creative

writing lessons. It is felt that this contrast between a phase of mental detachment and one of free imaginative involvement was one of the most interesting aspects of the experiment.

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